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DEVICE FOR HANDLING SUBSTRATES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE A
CLEAN ROOM

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Description

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The present invention concerns a device for manipulating substrates inside and outside an ultraclean workroom according to the preamble of claim 1.

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In previously known devices of this type, the individual cassette boxes are introduced manually or automatically into the ultraclean workroom, whereupon the substrates are processed inside the ultraclean workroom;

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subsequently, the cassette boxes provided with the processed substrates are brought to another station arranged at a distance from the ultraclean workroom. The arrangement of various stations of such a device takes up a great deal of space and is both time-

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consuming and expensive due to the manipulating devices that are arranged between the stations.

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The object of the present invention is to create a device for manipulating substrates inside and outside an ultraclean workroom of the type named initially, which can combine various work steps and production steps in a way that saves space.

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In order to solve this problem, in a device for manipulating substrates inside and outside an ultraclean workroom of the type named initially, the features given in claim 1 are provided.

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Since the storage room is arranged above the otherwise unutilized space of the ultraclean workroom, a device for manipulating substrates inside and outside the ultraclean workroom is created in a way that saves space, and the most varied work steps can be joined together or combined. Since the paths between steps are short, this results in a considerable time savings.

Ideally, the substrate cassettes of any type of cassette boxes can be introduced into the ultraclean workroom, processed, or handled in another way, and again placed in the same arrangement or in a new arrangement relative to one another in a cassette box, and, for example, can be stored newly sorted.

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Additional work steps and time-saving combinations of work steps are then possible, if the features according to claim 2 are provided.

2m2B47 Advantageous embodiments of the locking units of the sluice device are produced by the features of one or more of claims 3 to 7.

2m2B57 5 One or more lifting mechanisms are provided according to the features of claim 8, for simple manipulation of the substrate cassettes or cassette boxes.

2m2B67 10 According to the features of claim 9, the most varied work steps can be conducted individually or in combination, such as, for example, process steps, manufacturing steps, testing procedures, and sorting procedures, within the ultraclean workroom. New batches of substrates can also be combined in this way,
15 according to the testing and/or sorting procedures and placed in the storage room. The first manipulation device embodied according to the features of claim 10 is of particular advantage for this purpose.

2m2B77 20 According to the features of claim 11, the storage room is provided with a plurality of storage spaces, which can be achieved by the second manipulation device together with one or more locking units and together with one or more input/output openings for the cassette
25 boxes according to claim 13. Advantageous embodiments

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of this result from the features of one or more of claims 12 and 14 to 16.

Additional individual features of the invention can be 5 taken from the following description, in which the invention is described and explained in more detail on the basis of the examples of embodiment shown in the drawing. Here:

10 Figure 1 shows in schematic cross-sectional representation a device for manipulating substrates inside and outside an ultraclean workroom according to a preferred example of embodiment of the present invention;

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Figure 2 shows a partially broken away lateral view according to arrow II of Figure 1; and

Figure 3 shows a representation corresponding to Figure 20 1, but according to another example of embodiment of the present invention.

Device 10, which is shown in Figures 1 and 2 according to a preferred example of embodiment of the present 25 invention, serves for manipulating substrates 11 inside and outside an ultraclean workroom 15, wherein

substrates 11 are accommodated, stacked one on top of the other, in a cassette 12, and each cassette 12 is arranged inside a box 13 under ultraclean room conditions.

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The ultraclean workroom 15 has a housing 16, which has a parallelepiped form, for example, and which is hermetically sealed, and a sluice device 17 with one or more locking units 18. A housing 21 is placed on 10 housing 16 of ultraclean workroom 15, and this housing 21 contains or bounds a storage room 20. The sluice device 17 effects a manipulation transfer between storage room 20 and ultraclean workroom 15, without exchange of atmosphere. Storage room 20 is provided 15 with one or more input/output openings 22, 23, which can be closed by means of a door 30, for introducing or removing cassette boxes 13. In the example of embodiment shown, two input/output openings 22 and 23 arranged next to one another are provided in the 20 vicinity of floor 24 of housing 21. It is understood that input/output openings 22, 23 can be present in greater number and/or can be provided at other places of housing 21, for example, in the vicinity of its ceiling 25. Among other things, this depends on whether 25 input/output openings 22, 23 are operated manually or automatically by means of a loading device.

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Housing 21 of storage room 20 is of parallelepiped shape in the example of embodiment shown and thus relatively high and configured such that rows and columns of 5 storage spaces 28 are provided for cassette boxes 13 along both longitudinal sidewalls 26 and 27. A manipulating device 31 for cassette boxes 13 is provided between the two storage space arrangements 28 and 29. The manipulating device 31 has an upright column 32, 10 which is guided longitudinally in floor 24 and in ceiling 25 of housing 21 by means of a linear guide 33, 34. A horizontally movable bent-arm fork 36, the fork ends 37 of which can grasp cassette boxes 13, for example, on top, is guided in the vertical direction at 15 column 32. Manipulating device 31 can thus be moved in three coordinate axes, so that cassette boxes 13 can be moved from the one or more input/output openings 22, 23 to storage spaces 28, 29 and back, and between storage spaces 28, 29 and locking units 18 of sluice device 17.

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Several chambers 42, 43, 44, for example, are arranged next to one another on one of the longitudinal sides 41 of housing 16 inside housing 16 for the ultraclean workroom 15. These chambers 42 to 44 may be used as

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process chambers, manufacturing chambers, testing
chambers identification chambers

and/or the like. It is understood that, independent of

5 the representation shown in the drawing, any number of
chambers may be provided. On opposite-lying
longitudinal side 46 of housing 16 for ultraclean
workroom 15, one or more lifting devices 47 is or are
provided, which is or are arranged in the region of
10 locking units 18 of sluice device 17 or below these
units and one lifting device is assigned to one locking
unit. Lifting device 47 possesses a rod 48 that can be
moved up and down, by means of which a substrate
cassette 12 can be moved up and down.

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Between the arrangement of chambers 42 to 44 on one
longitudinal side 46 and the arrangement of one or more
lifting devices 47 on the other longitudinal side 46, a
manipulating device 51 is provided, which can be moved
20 back and forth in the longitudinal direction of housing
16 on a linear guide 53 of the floor side. In the
example of embodiment shown, manipulating device 51 has
a horizontally movable bent-arm gripper [claw] 56, and
the gripper end 57 of this claw can transfer substrate
25 11 between substrate cassette 12 applied on lifting
device 47, on the one hand, and one or more of chambers
42 to 44.

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In the example of embodiment of Figures 1 and 2, the one or more locking units 18 of sluice device 17 is or are formed at floor 24 of housing 21, which here forms an intermediate wall of housings 16 and 21, provided directly above the arrangement of the one or more lifting devices 47. The locking unit 18 has a rotating support 61, on which can be tightly seated the lower edge 62 of a hood 64 of each cassette box 13. For the sluice-type introduction of substrate cassette 12 into the ultraclean workroom 15, the bottom 63 of the cassette is unlocked from hood 64 of cassette box 13, removed by rod 48 of lifting device 47, and cassette box 13 is lowered to the level of manipulating device 51, so that substrates 11 of cassette 12 can be manipulated. If several lifting devices 47 are provided in the case of several locking units 48 and thus several substrate cassettes 12 are to be manipulated simultaneously or sequentially within the ultraclean workspace 15, the individual substrate cassettes 17 can be newly loaded in a different way, so that new batches can be made up. A substrate cassette 12 is put back into its cassette box 13 in the appropriate reverse manner by means of lifting device 47, whereupon after locking cassette bottom 63 with hood 64, cassette box 13 can be introduced by means

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~~of manipulating device 31 from locking unit 18 to a storage space 28, 29 or into input/output openings 22, 23.~~

- 5 In the example of embodiment of device 10' shown in Figure 3, the site 59', at which the one or more lifting devices 47' is or are found, in fact, also in the vicinity of a longitudinal side of the housing, but still inside storage space 20', and thus outside
- 10 ultraclean workroom 15, whose sidewall 65 displaced inwardly forms a part of sluice device 17' or of one or more locking units 18'. In this example of embodiment, a complete cassette box 13' is introduced onto lifting device 47' by means of manipulating device 31', and is
- 15 lowered into the region of sidewall 65 or its locking unit 18' by means of the latter. Lifting device 47' is thus configured as a storage space 29 that can be lowered.

- 20 The same number of sluice doors 66 are found in side wall 65 as the number of locking units 18', and each of these doors opens together with a side door 67 in cassette box 13', if cassette box 13' is docked laterally at side wall 65 in a way that seals sluice
- 25 door 66 opposite storage space 20'. After opening doors 66 and 67, substrates 11 can be removed from docked box

13' for manipulating in chambers 42' to 44' and are brought back again into the appropriate box 13'. It is understood that one or more of such lifting devices 47' can be arranged together with locking units 18' along 5 this corridor 59' between the outer wall of the housing and side wall 65. In this example, box 13' cannot be opened via the bottom, but in a region of its hood 64', in order to remove substrates 11.

10 The other components of device 10' (Figure 3) correspond to those of device 10 (Figures 1 and 2), whereby bent-arm fork 36' of manipulation device 31' is adapted to the design of box 13', whose hood 64' is provided with a handle 69 on top.

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In this way, various steps of production, treatment, testing, classifying, identifying and including storage and new combinations of batches of substrates 11 inside a cassette 12, 12' can be achieved in a unitary device

20 10 or 10'.